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ABSTRACT

The role of high school English department heads as active leaders and departmental advocates, as well as their role in improving their departments' composition programs, is examined in this paper. The first section provides an overview of department heads' basic responsibilities, noting the need for them to have an active role in setting priorities for the school's entire program. It then discusses ways the department head can actively participate in recruiting faculty members; the department head's role in orienting new teachers; the importance of a department's having a method of governance, and the department head's role in governance; and ways that department heads can work toward achieving reasonable teaching loads and freeing teachers from nonprofessional chores. The second section offers suggestions for developing an effective composition program. It discusses ways of enlisting the aid of universities in training teachers of writing, describes locally sponsored workshops that have proved valuable in preparing teachers to teach writing, and shows the effects of the recent trend toward phase-elective programs on the development of good composition programs. (GW)

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The Department Head Who Is Indeed

Webb Salmon

Introduction

Eleven years ago last spring I ended my career in a high school English department in which I had taught for fourteen years and had served as department head for eight. It was a good school and a good department, and I left both with regret. I thought that eventually I would learn not to miss colleagues with whom I had worked so long and not to miss the importance we felt our work had. But, like Mr. Frost's hired man, I find that "... those days [still] trouble me like a dream. / You wouldn't think they would. / How some things linger!" Though the work of the high school English department has a special, still treasured place in my life, I must not delude myself into believing I am still in touch. Too much has happened in public schools in the past decade--a decade always interesting, often chaotic, and sometimes sad--for me to know your current situation well. The years away may give me the advantage of perspective, but I am acutely aware that I am not as well informed about the 1977 public schools as I wish at this moment that I were.

Even so, I hope that what I say will strike you as being basic. I cannot claim that I am advocating a "return" to the basics, for I fear that many English department heads have never had the opportunity to be there. The "there" that I am speaking of is the place or places where basic decisions about the school's academic program are made.

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My comments will fall into two distinct, but I hope related, categories: (1)duties that the department head should be expected to perform, but too often is not, and (2)suggestions for improving the department's composition program. In both sections I will focus on what the department head can do or encourage others to do. I will say almost nothing in my prepared remarks about classroom practices--though I will be glad to do that if our informal discussion moves in that direction.

THE DEPARTMENT HEAD AS AN ACTIVE LEADER AND ADVOCATE

Overview of responsibilities

The basic point in the first part of my talk is that the English department head must, more than any other person, have the responsibility and the authority for leadership in the development of the English program. To fulfill that responsibility, he or she should also have a role in setting priorities for the school's entire program. I know that much of what I will advocate cannot be achieved easily in many of your schools. But I hope you will agree that the attempt to create situations in which department heads can, and indeed must, exercise leadership is worthy of extraordinary effort.

Too often the department head has been responsible only for such chores as distributing textbooks, scheduling films, and supervising the purchase of supplementary teaching materials. All of this, of course, is part of the world's work. But the head's duties should go much further.

She must help her administrative superiors know and care about what constitutes a reasonable work load for English teachers; she should be responsible for coordinating, as prescribed in an instrument of governance, all of the department's work; she should be responsible for the supervision and in-service training of new English teachers; and, perhaps most importantly, she should have a strong voice in determining what people are employed to teach English and which of these are and are not retained.

The department head should have a reduced teaching load and an increased salary. I would not suggest that supervisory or administrative work ought to be better paid than teaching work, but the head should be well paid for the hours she stays after school before going home to papers and class preparation, and she should be well paid for the weeks she should be employed before other teachers report for duty and after the school year has ended.

Obviously, the sort of department head that I am speaking of will represent and advocate the department's vested interests. How well I still remember one particular scene between my principal and me! Though each had on occasion stood with the other against critics, we had also disagreed with each other often enough that I fear we resembled two old boxers who had gone the distance many times before--circling, wary, each

aware of the other's moves. But I think neither of us, given the chance, would have delivered a knock-out blow, partly because of a mutual respect and fondness and partly because of the joy of the continuing fight. It seemed to him on this day, and he may very well have been right, that I was pushing too hard for the department's interests. He said with considerable annoyance, "Webb, you seem to think that the English department is the only department in this school." I answered, "Yes; and if the other department heads take the same attitude toward their departments, you'll have a fine school, won't you?" We understood each other, and so he was able to grin and admit, "That's right." Like many high school administrators, he was an over-the-hill coach. But he was also a highly intelligent man who had the good sense to know that he needed strong academic departments if he was to preside over the kind of school the community expected, and he was perfectly capable of using people who could help him create that kind of school. His interests and the department's interests lay on a somewhat, though not entirely, common ground.

The department head who would see after the interests of the English program and English teachers must be in the meetings where school priorities are set. If an administrative staff sets important priorities, then academic department heads should be part of the administrative staff. If the administrative staff is content to administer routine day-by-day affairs, then heads need not waste their time in such meetings but should

meet on a regular basis with the principal for making basic decisions about the school's business. If important decisions about the school's academic program are made by the county director of English, the heads of English must work closely with that person. Wherever the basic decisions about personnel, teaching loads, curriculum, and support money for academic programs are being made, there the department head should be.

I must not seem to suggest that the department head be a 1977 version of the Western gunfighter--quick on the draw, dead of aim, and alone in the middle of the street. We know that someone was always eager to get the fastest gun in town, and eventually did, and that the gunslinger at last rested on Boot Hill--no fit place from which to plan curriculum and work for reasonable teaching loads. A department head who gets himself shot down is of no use to his colleagues.

The support of her teachers is one factor that enables the department head to survive. The importance of this support is illustrated by what happened recently to a long time friend of mine, a senior high school department head whose teachers had already come to her support before she knew it. A plan was afoot to increase her teaching load from $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 courses per term. Without her knowledge, the entire English faculty sent a protesting memorandum to the principal and assistant principals and requested that these officials meet with the English faculty. In the memorandum they cited their concern for the reputation of the school

and its English program, they emphasized the kind of leadership they wanted and had been receiving from their department head, and they expressed concern that if she did not have time to offer that leadership "department morale" would suffer "a damaging blow," "ultimately affecting teacher performance." The principals, all of whom I know to be sensible people, agreed to the English faculty's request. (If you are interested in the department head's comment on this situation, I will be glad to share it with you in the discussion session; I warn you, though, that her explanation shows the scars of many a head-on confrontation. Like Siward's son, she has her "hurts" "on the front," but unlike that young man she is far from dead and in no way ready for us to say, "Why then, God's soldier be [she]!")

Ideally, the department head should have ~~a cordial~~ an amicable working relationship with administrators; the principal should welcome, even encourage, strong leadership at the department level. Though principal and department head may differ about specifics and though the possibility of tension is always present, their basic aims are similar. Both want the best possible school and English department they and their colleagues can build. It is a mistake for teachers to automatically assume that administrators are the

enemy. We teachers sometimes think that their values are regrettably not the same as ours, but some administrators sincerely want strong academic programs. And even those who do not lean in that direction as conspicuously as we should like them to do know that it is in their own best interest to have such programs. Department heads and their teacher colleagues must find intelligent ways in which to help administrators support the work of academic departments.

Recruiting faculty

Few activities of departmental and administrative personnel are as important in determining the quality of the department as is recruiting faculty, yet this activity is often performed less than well. For a few years, maybe more, the job market is going to favor the recruiters. The school system that does not employ its share of high caliber teachers does not have the same excuse it had when there were more jobs than qualified candidates. No one in the school system--not the principal, not the superintendent, not the personnel director--is in such a good position as the department head to know the kind of teacher the department needs. The importance of the department head's having a significant role in hiring is so obvious that it is incredible that often this person is involved, if at all, in only a minor way.

High school department heads and their faculty should make good use of their acquaintances at teacher training colleges and universities. A telephone call to a candidate's professor whom a faculty member knows is sometimes more helpful than a to-whom-it-may-concern letter in a dossier. And calls to acquaintances at the university can inform high school people about prospective candidates whom they should invite to come to the local school for interviews.

The best of the teaching faculty should be involved in both the seeking out and the interviewing. Too many superintendents, personnel officers, and principals, and a few department heads (myself included) have had too much confidence in their ability to employ the best people without sufficient involvement of the English faculty. Candidates should meet as many of the teachers as possible, and these teachers and the department head should confer before the head speaks for the department when the final decision is being made.

The intern program offers a fine opportunity for recruiting promising young teachers. I would be a conspirator in a plan to keep the obviously mediocre or less from interning in my department. If high school people realized how desperately university teacher-training departments need the cooperation of good high school departments, they would, I believe, be more adamant in setting the conditions under which they accept interns.

In our high school the assistant principal in charge of interns and I determined which applicants we would approve, giving priority to those with the better records and from the better schools. In the English department we would permit an intern to teach only three classes,, with two preparations--partly because we didn't want overworked, improvising neophytes teaching our students and partly because we wanted to lure the best by having the word spread in universities that our department did not take advantage of practice teachers. I confess that I was not above assigning an especially promising intern to two of our most trusted teachers and then relying on those teachers to tell me whether the young person should be offered a job. That is the way we recruited the best first-year teacher I have ever worked with.

Participation in professional meetings, state department of education committees, and university conferences can also be used for recruiting. In such gatherings the department head and her colleagues are likely to become acquainted with some of the most competent people in their geographic area. Only a very few of these people will be employable, but they will know about others who are.

I still recall with pleasure how our school recruited my replacement. I had met him in a summer institute for experienced teachers at Indiana University, where he was quickly recognized by his classmates as the best

student in the institute, and I had worked with him later on a state curriculum committee and in the state council of teachers of English. Once it had been determined that he was the best person to head the department, we recruited him with the vigor usually reserved in Indiana for the hiring of basketball coaches. Employing officials traveled to his city and interviewed him during a fine dinner in a comfortable restaurant. Several weeks later when he was inclined to accept our school's offer but was being tempted by an attractive counter-offer from his own system, our superintendent personally carried his contract to him. He is still chairman there, providing fine leadership for the department and contributing regularly to the success of state and NCTE conferences.

Of course, the school system that encourages its teachers to be active in professional meetings risks having them recruited by its competitors. The best systems will be willing to take the chance, confident that they will win in this sort of competition more often than not and aware that the alternative to aggressive recruiting is the necessity of choosing from only those candidates who apply. If the very best people who can be persuaded to become available are to be employed, they must be sought out; seldom do the most competent experienced teachers show up through regular channels. Without good recruiting, a department is almost certainly doomed to mediocrity, or worse.

Orienting new teachers

Enabling first-year teachers to do more than just survive is an important responsibility of the department head and the experienced faculty. The head must make certain that the new people are not abused--perhaps, even, that they are favored--in class assignments. If a situation exists that requires one teacher to have three prepararations and another two, the experienced teacher should be given three and the inexperienced teacher two. If a particular class is expected to be troublesome, a new teacher should not be assigned to that group. If classrooms and offices are shared, as they are likely to be in these years of crowded schools, the new teacher should be assigned with a carefully chosen experienced colleague, not with another new teacher or a frustrated, embittered veteran.

The new teacher's orientation to the curriculum is particularly important. There are, of course, many ways to achieve this. Some of the best instruction of this sort that I have witnessed was done by two grade-level chairmen and their committee members. Their planning sessions usually began routinely enough but often ended with lively discussion of the substance of the material to be taught. In these sessions the new teachers not only learned about subject matter, methodology, and the availability of library materials; they also learned that they had senior colleagues who were well informed and enthusiastic about their discipline. These sessions were not one-way affairs, of course; for those young people

who had experienced particularly good instruction at the university could share this with their experienced colleagues.

Participating in departmental governance is another important part of a new teacher's settling into her work. She sees recommendations grow out of committees on which she serves, and she sees the recommendations accepted, modified, or rejected by the department as a whole. She learns the areas in which she is autonomous, and those in which she and her colleagues share responsibility. This experience of seeing how a group of professionals work and sometimes quarrel with each other and of having a role in setting the department's course can enable a bright, conscientious young teacher to become responsible and valuable very quickly.

Leading in departmental governance

A really good department [illegible] is likely to have members who will insist upon participating in its governance. The department head should welcome this participation for three quite practical reasons, in addition to any more admirable philosophical inclinations he or she might have. First, the department that is self-governing is likely to be a responsible department, one that takes pride in the quality of instruction its members offer. Second, it would be foolish for the head to deprive herself and the school administrators of the sort of counsel that comes from highly intelligent and conscientious teachers when they participate in setting policy. The third, and least admirable, reason

is that the head of a good department probably could not avoid such participation without heavy expense of time and energy, not to mention the low esteem in which her colleagues would hold her.

I recall that once my principal had impressed on me the importance of our department's following a particular course of action. I agreed with him and assured him that I would try to persuade the English faculty to adopt a policy that would lead us into that way. Somewhat dismayed at my failure to assure him then and there of what the department would do, he suggested that on this issue there should be no voting, that I should just announce what our policy would be. I explained that I could get by with such an announcement to less than first rate faculty, but that these people could not implement this particular policy--that I would need the support of the very best people and that these would insist upon having a voice in setting policy they were obliged to carry out. To his credit, the principal understood and kept hands off while he waited for the department to act.

Various departments will be pleased with various methods of governance, of course. The size of the department, the depth of experience and talent in its faculty, and the relationship between the department and the principal's and county supervisor's offices--all these will be factors

in determining how it governs itself. But if my department had as many as fifteen faculty, I would want to have either grade-level committees or committees for different parts of the academic discipline, depending on the organization of the English curriculum. And I would want an executive committee, with its responsibilities spelled out in an instrument of governance. In general, the various committees would recommend policy to the department, with policy in fundamental matters being set by the department as a whole working in cooperation with the principal or the assistant principal responsible for academic matters. To avoid the waste of time that results from every matter's being referred to the entire department, the department head and executive committee would be empowered to make ~~[illegible]~~ decisions in specified areas.

I cannot emphasize too strongly the importance of a department's having a method of governance. If it has one, issues that arise can be solved within the pre-arranged method. If it does not have one, a method must be found for each issue, often with a waste of the faculty's valuable time and with the ill feeling that can result from deciding on procedural principles when a controversial matter lies on the table.

The most severe crisis I faced as a department head came as a result of administrative interference with the department's literature program. At first, my displeasure was reserved altogether for the superintendent, who--reacting to a complaint from a parent--ordered a particular paperback

text removed from the shelves of the school's bookstore. Gradually I came to see that my colleagues and I were partly responsible. Had we had the foresight to develop a policy for handling such a problem (my only defense, a weak one, is that all this happened before such policies were common), the crisis might never have occurred. Responsible teachers and principals worked out a policy that would prevent a recurrence of the situation, but not without emotional and potentially explosive confrontations that, had they concluded less fortunately, could have been catastrophic for the English program. That is an extremely hazardous way to learn one's professional lessons.

I would recommend that those departments that do not now have a formal, written instrument of governance proceed in deliberate haste to develop one.

Working toward reasonable teaching loads and elimination of non-professional work

A department's success depends to a great extent on the work load that its teachers carry. With the increasing difficulty of securing adequate financial support for instruction, the goal that NCTE announced about 15 years ago--100 students per English teacher--is just about impossible to achieve in most schools. Good departments will continue to work for four classes with a maximum of 25 students per class. Until that or another kind

of reasonable teaching load is achieved, teachers will not have the time and energy, even if they have the will and patience, to participate efficiently in such important matters as recruiting, curriculum planning, training of new teachers, and governance of the department. The department head must keep the problem of work load continually before the administration. Particularly, he must stress, with hard data, the special demands on the time of the teacher of composition. And he should report to his administrative superiors advances that other schools make toward achieving reasonable teaching loads. Many adminsitrators, in addition to valuing good instruction, are proud people who are troubled when their counterparts in other school systems outrun them.

School must keep, of course, while a department is working for reasonable teaching loads. One thing the department head can do to bring limited relief to overworked instructors is to advocate school practices that will free English teachers of non-professional responsibilities. Here are a few suggestions:

--the employment of people in the community to supervise study rooms, if supervised study rooms are necessary

--a plan for providing skilled secretarial services, if not from professional secretaries, then from advanced students in the Business Education department

--an evaluation of the extra-curricular program to determine what should be cut and what part of that worth keeping can be supervised by students and para-professionals

--an efficient, centralized business management system that frees teachers from collecting fees and renting texts (I have seen such a system work so effectively that a teacher was not even allowed, and certainly not required, to handle student monies.)

--protection of young women English teachers against the assumption that it is appropriate for them to direct dance routines and skits for variety shows, coach the cheer leaders, chaperone an unlimited number of social outings, sponsor a club, and direct publications as an extra-curricular activity

Practices such as these will not entirely compensate for an unreasonable teaching load and must not be used as an excuse for one, but they certainly can enable a teacher to concentrate on her professional duties rather than on peripheral matters.

The head of an English department whose teachers are freed of non-professional chores before teachers in other departments achieve the same benefit can remind critical colleagues that English teachers' gaining this advantage can hasten the day when other teachers in the school can enjoy it. If the criticism persists, he may have to admit that there is something quite special about the kind of professional work good English teachers must be free to perform.

SUGGESTIONS ABOUT THE COMPOSITION PROGRAM

I turn now to the second part of my comments: the department head's role in developing a composition program at a time when there is an outcry for a return to the basics. People who sound that call think that there has been a day when most students wrote well. In those good old days, they know, we diagrammed sentences, identified parts of speech, memorized rules, and filled out blanks in workbooks. I fear that these activities are what many parents and newspaper editorialists mean by "the basics." Though I am not among those who are sure that there can be no relationship between the teaching of grammar and the teaching of writing (I think research findings on this matter are not nearly so conclusive as some announce), I do feel certain that the teaching of grammar as we have usually known it has little, if any, effect on students' writing. I, for one, have no desire to return to the good old days. In fact, I suspect that those days never existed, ~~but~~ that they are based in nostalgia.

Possibility of overdue help from universities

Little wonder that secondary school teachers have been puzzled about how to go about the teaching of writing: most of them received little help in their college years from their English and English education professors. But this situation is finally changing. For some years the English department at Florida State has required that inexperienced teaching

assistants take a course in the teaching of writing before they begin teaching freshman composition, even if they have earned the teaching license in their undergraduate training. And they have been encouraged to take graduate work in rhetorical theory that will enable them to understand the principles on which their instructional practices are based. More and more of our people are taking formal training in laboratory methods of instructing students who have pronounced writing problems. Some of these young teachers are taking positions in high school English departments, and a few who take advanced work in some combination of rhetoric, linguistics, and pedagogy are teaching in programs that will train future secondary school teachers. Our English Education department this year reduced the number of hours for the general English methods course to make room for an undergraduate course called Methods of Teaching Writing. All undergraduates who are to be licensed to teach English, whether they are English or English Education majors, must take this course. And other universities are beginning to recognize their responsibility in preparing teachers of writing. This recognition, though late in coming, is heartening.

I encourage that you as an organization and as leaders of your local English programs let university English and English Education department heads know what kind of training you would like for your new teachers to have.

Partly because of today's tight job market these department heads are, and should be, much concerned about the characteristics that make their graduates employable. You represent that job market, and I think that you can have more influence than you know on the training of teachers.

Value of locally sponsored workshops

Perhaps just as encouraging as this awakening in universities is the initiative some schools are taking in preparing their English teachers to teach writing. Pinellas County's program is one that I have been privileged to learn about. I should like to tell you about it, for it strikes me as the sort of practical and worthwhile plan that you department heads may want to advocate to your faculty and administrators. I have asked and received permission from Dr. Margaret Howell, Pinellas County's director of English, to say that she will be pleased to respond to inquiries about the program.

This past summer Dr. Howell invited me to teach a composition workshop of 30 hours (6 hours per day for 5 days) in which the participants would work on their own writing skills as they wrote 3 papers. The participants were all Pinellas County teachers of English in grades 7 through 12 who had been selected from a list of applicants. Several of them were department heads. All were ~~energetic~~, able people eager to improve their professional competency. The week before my arrival they had worked for 30 hours on

curriculum plans in composition for this academic year, with Dr. Shelby Harvey, who is a resource teacher in Pinellas County, serving as their coordinator. Participating teachers were paid an honorarium from staff development funds and were awarded credit toward the extension of the teaching certificate. No grades (except verification that the work had been satisfactorily completed) and no university credit were assigned.

I could not and was not expected to serve as an expert on the school system's English curriculum. Though we did hold sessions on problems in evaluating student papers and techniques of teaching students to write essay examinations, my primary job was to be the participants' instructor in composition. Of course I hoped that the assignments and our discussions would be germane to the participants' work as teachers of writing. To that end, I deliberately designed assignments not dissimilar to those they might ask their own students to write. And all of the assignments--one a personal essay, one a reaction paper to a piece of literature, and one an essay in argument and persuasion--were intended to encourage the participants to write papers that they thought discussed worthy subjects. I wanted them to experience the determination to do well and the sense of achievement that the writer has when he or she is working on a project that matters. I believe the plan worked, for the teachers wrote some fine papers and seemed eager to make use of our work in their classrooms this fall.

We made at least two mistakes in structuring the workshop. Because I had a commitment that could not be changed, we had to offer the composition component the week following the curriculum component. Fortunately, the composition work was sufficiently related to the curriculum work that all agreed that if a similar workshop is held next summer the composition component should come first so the teachers can make maximum use of it as they plan their own courses. Our second problem was that 1 week of composition was not enough. I felt that the participants had to work harder than was desirable. They cheerfully agreed; but they insisted that the work in composition must not be reduced and recommended that next summer's group, should there be one, have 1½ or 2 weeks for the composition work.

Some of you recall pleasantly, I suspect, another kind of summer program, the summer institutes held on many university campuses in the 1960's (those sponsored by College Board and later by NDEA funds). Though we regret the passing of the days when funds were available for such institutes, the Pinellas County plan has these advantages: First, teachers who have obligations that will not permit them to move to a university campus for a summer can participate in a two- or three-week program held in their own county. Second, the instructor comes to the local school system with a good idea of what the participants feel that they need (I conferred closely with Dr. Howell before going to Largo to be sure my plans were appropriate for the teachers there). Third, the

curriculum planning component in the workshop is coordinated, not by a college teacher working on his own campus with teachers from many school systems, but by a leader in the local schools working with the people who will actually implement the plans. And finally, there can be a genuinely effective follow-up program, for the summer workshop participants can serve as leaders as the training continues during the following school year. In Pinellas County, for example, seven of the participants are serving as leaders in four similar workshops during this academic year. Each of the workshops will meet for six sessions and will accommodate up to 15 participants, all of whom will enroll voluntarily.

This combination of components--one in actual writing and one in the writing curriculum--is worth your consideration if you and your county director are planning ways to strengthen your teachers' competency in teaching writing.

Composition in phase-elective programs

The recent trend toward phase-elective programs has particular importance for department heads concerned with developing good composition programs. You know, of course, that though this curriculum innovation has been greatly and perhaps justifiably praised, the praise has not been unanimous. Some critics think that phase-elective programs have provided excuses for teachers and students to do whatever they please and call it

"English"; these detractors are sure that schools that permit such carrying-on have strayed far from the basics and should return in all haste. Some thoughtful school people worry that greatly increasing the number of courses a department offers increases the number of preparations a teacher must make, and so will result in either still more work for the instructor or inadequate preparation.

I would listen to both of these criticisms, especially to the second if I were a department head trying to improve my department's composition program. Any change in the program, however laudable, that increases a teacher's work load and so ~~decreases~~ reduces the time she can give to planning pre-writing sessions and to reading her students' essays, deserves the department head's skepticism.

But there is a brighter side to this issue. Phase-elective programs encourage the offering of written composition courses that are just that--writing courses. Too often when in our traditional grade-level English courses we have intended to integrate composition with grammar and literature, the composition has been neglected--grammar tests are easier to grade than essays, and literature is an awfully lot of fun to teach. And so I would encourage you who have not already done so to take advantage of the opportunity that an elective program can give you to establish genuine written composition courses, taking care to avoid the pitfalls critics of the new trend have cited.

I have studied the program of one ~~Indiana~~ English department whose teachers, under the leadership of an excellent head, have systematically developed over the past few years a curriculum that combines the best of their traditional program and ~~its~~ their new phase-elective program. Composition figures prominently in both ~~programs~~ schemes. I have permission of the head of that department to invite you to inquire about her department's work, and I will be glad to provide her address for any of you who want it. I hope that the good work that she and her colleagues are doing can instruct you and your teachers as you work toward your department's goals.

Closing

I must not be naive and expect that most of what you want for your departments will be achieved easily. We know that these are days when school budgets are restricted and when the public's confidence has waned. But these are times, too, when many who insist that schools must return to the basics also hope that we will be able to improve language skills. They may be mistaken about what is basic. But none will question the value of emphasizing composition, and some will even listen to an argument that the department with the competence and the willingness to do that deserves special consideration by those who allocate budget, decide how many classes teachers will teach, and determine class size. These are years,

despite all our problems, when responsible English departments led by aggressive department heads can reasonably, and perhaps successfully, make this argument.

I have closed on a note of optimism. But surely that is all right. The work of English departments is important work, and those who teach in them ought to allow themselves to look just a little beyond what is clearly realistic on those special occasions when they come together to talk about their profession. Soon enough we will be back at our desks dealing with what Richard Wilbur calls "the world's hunks and colors," acknowledging "the punctual rape of every blessed day." We need a reminder now and then of Mr. Wilbur's "clean linen" and "rosy hands" and "clear dances" if we are to keep our "difficult balance" between the idealized world that we should like and the real world in which our departments must exist and, hopefully, prosper.